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Welcome

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Australian Population Association 13th Biennial Conference call for papers

The 13th biennial conference of the Australian Population Association will be held in Adelaide from 5-8 December 2006. The theme is "Population, Policy and Australia's Destiny".

Highlights and key speakers include:

- **The W D Borrie Lecture** - Professor Ian Pool, University of Waikato.
- **Population and Policy** - Professor Graeme Hugo, University of Adelaide; Professor Peter McDonald, Australian National University; Professor Gavin Jones, National University of Singapore
- **Local and Regional population change** - Ms Kate Atkinson, General Manager, City of Playford; Mr Peter Hall, Director Planning and Community Services, City of Victor Harbor; The Hon Greg Crafter, Population Policy consultant
- **Transnationalism** - Professor Barry Chiswick, University of Illinois at Chicago; Dr Marla Asis, Scalabrini Migration Centre, Philippines; Dr Hania Zlotnik, United Nations Population Division.

Information on the conference, including registration and the call for papers can be found from the link at http://www.apa.org.au.

Major sponsors of this conference are The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the South Australian Department of Trade and Economic Development while the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is an associate sponsor.

Participation in the National Data Network

The number of organisations contributing to the NDN is expanding. Organisations currently participating in the National Data Network are:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Cystic Fibrosis Australia
- Office of Economic and Statistical Research (Queensland)
- Department of Premier & Cabinet (Tasmania)
- Telethon Institute of Child Health Research
- Department of Planning (New South Wales)

Details of the resources being published on the NDN is available through Search on the NDN website or through the Rich Client. More information about the NDN can be found at www.nationaldatanetwork.org

The NDN can be contacted by emailing: inquiries@nationaldatanetwork.org or telephoning: 02 6252 5875.

Be automatically informed

You can subscribe to NSS News by sending an e-mail to inquiries@nss.gov.au requesting your name be added to the mailing list. Alternatively, you can access the newsletter directly on the NSS web site. We hope you enjoy reading NSS News and look forward to receiving your feedback

The newsletter and web site is produced and maintained and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

For more information please contact Leanne den Hartog on 02 6252 7244 or email **leanne.denhartog@abs.gov.au**.

DITR collaborates with ABS on innovation statistics

The publication of the ABS's 2003 Survey of Innovation in Australian Businesses represents a significant step forward in better understanding innovation in Australian businesses. The richness of this micro-level dataset and its relevance to public policy formulation and evaluation is widely recognised. To maximise the data's usefulness to the Australian community, the ABS and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (DITR) entered into a collaborative arrangement to analyse this micro-level data.

As a result of the collaboration ABS and DITR published a joint paper *'Patterns of Innovation in Australian Businesses 2003'* in January 2006 which casts light on the general characteristics of innovators.

Following on from that work DITR has recently undertaken a more detailed econometric analysis of the survey data to investigate the relationship between business characteristics (such as collaboration) and the degree of innovation novelty. Collaboration is seen as an important means for Australia's largely small enterprises to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for successful innovation.

Using ABS data and advanced modelling techniques, DITR was able to quantify the extent to which business collaboration and other relevant characteristics impact on the probabilities of Australian businesses achieving high degrees of innovation novelty. The results of this work were published as a research paper in April 2006 entitled '*Collaboration and Other Factors Influencing Innovation Novelty in Australian Businesses – An Econometric Analysis'*.

Some of the key findings included:

- Innovating businesses that engage in collaboration are 70% more likely to achieve higher degrees of innovation novelty than non-collaborating businesses
- The number of different types of collaboration (collaboration diversity) is more important to the likelihood of achieving 'frontier' (or 'new to the world') innovation than the number of collaborations (collaboration intensity), and
- Foreign ownership is associated with a stronger likelihood of 'frontier' innovation than is pure domestic ownership

Both papers were presented at an Innovation Analysis Forum held recently in Canberra and represent a significant step forward in understanding the characteristics of innovative Australian businesses.

For further information on this research contact Tim Harley at DITR at tim.harley@industry.gov.au or Glyn Prichard at ABS at glyn.prichard@abs.gov.au.

Collaborations Under the Census and Statistics Act

The collaboration between DITR and ABS was conducted under Clause 7A of the Statistics Determination. This determination covers projects that will assist the Statistician to perform statistical functions. Provided the stringent access conditions are met, non ABS staff are able to access certain types of micro-level survey data collected by the ABS under the Census and Statistics Act. Under the determination DITR staff had supervised access to micro-level data on ABS premises.

The collaboration provided the ABS with invaluable feedback about the collection from subject matter experts, and resulted in a joint publication, as well as other outputs. Other collaborations have provided similar benefits for the ABS and the partners.

The ABS is looking at engaging in more of these collaborations in the future. While the number of collaborative projects will be limited due to the resources involved and conditions to be met, they provide a valuable way to increase the use of the data held by the ABS, and better meet the needs of data users.

Further information can be obtained on this policy by contacting Julie Evans (ABS - Office of the Statistician) on (02) 6252 7809.

Australian Cystic Fibrosis Data Registry

On 22 May 2006, the Hon Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing, launched the web based version of the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Data Registry, which is a repository of information about patients who attend specialist Cystic Fibrosis centres at Australian hospitals.

The Data Registry is managed by Cystic Fibrosis Australia (CFA) with advice from a Data Registry Advisory Committee consisting principally of specialist doctors from the centres. The Data Registry contains information on cystic fibrosis in Australia and is an invaluable aid to researchers seeking specific data for research projects and clinical trials.

CFA have joined the National Data Network to assist researchers in locating information about the registry. For more information about the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Data Registry, please visit the Cystic Fibrosis website at www.cysticfibrosis.org.au

Benefits of Sharing Information With the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and the ABS, as well as the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) share a common goal of encouraging well-informed decision making through the use of timely, accurate and relevant information about the financial sector. The agencies co-operate on the definition, collection and on-going management and publication of information acquired from Australian financial institutions.

This co-operative approach provides substantial benefits: to the community through consistent, timely and relevant statistics; to financial institutions through reduced reporting and administrative overheads; and to the government by avoiding duplication of effort and the costs of compiling compatible financial statistics.

To realise these benefits, APRA shares much of the prudential and statistical information it collects from financial institutions with the ABS and the RBA. This information is used by the ABS in publications such as Managed Funds Australia, Australian National Accounts: Financial Accounts (cat. no. 5232.0), Housing Finance Australia (cat. No. 5609.0), and Lending Finance Australia (cat no. 5670.0). The data are also used in benchmarks and weights for other publications, including Consumer Price Index Australia (cat no. 6401.0).

The ABS receives timely data from APRA. Over 90 per cent of the forms from financial institutions were received by the due date for the March 2006 quarterly survey. Most of the remaining forms were lodged within two days of the due date.

The quality of APRA data the ABS uses in its publications is also high. In the June 2005 edition of Managed Funds Australia, the ABS stated that the superannuation data collected by APRA “are likely to be more accurate” than that previously collected in the ABS Survey of Superannuation. APRA runs the data collected from financial institutions through a comprehensive set of quality checks. The checks identify unusual figures that are promptly followed up with financial institutions. The high level of co-operation from financial institutions is largely due to APRA’s role as prudential regulator.

APRA and the ABS are finalising a Memorandum of Understanding that formalises a long history of co-operation. Subject to statutory limitations and obligations imposed by relevant legislation, the agencies will continue to share data and ensure that they continue to promote well-informed decision-making through the use of timely, accurate and relevant information about the financial sector.

Increasing Interest in Longitudinal Surveys

Longitudinal surveys are undertaken in many countries covering a wide range of topics, such as children & youth, immigration, income and health.

Longitudinal Surveys provide information about changes over time and show the impact of these changes. When applied in the socio-economic context, for example, longitudinal surveys helps us to understand how peoples' situations change over time and the factors that bring about change. It is one of the least understood but most powerful correlational social analysis tools available.

A number of longitudinal studies have been features in past issues of the NSS News, including the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children, (LSAC) - NSS News #5, and the Household Income, Labour Dynamics Australia Longitudinal Survey (HILDA) - NSS News #1.

At a recent meeting of the StatsNetwork, the design and implementation of longitudinal surveys was discussed. In general, the topics covered were: the developmental process; the known challenges and associated issues peculiar to longitudinal surveys; the description of outputs; and the presentation of results.

Information about this session on the StatsNetwork can be found on the NSS website at http://www.nss.gov.au.

For information about the StatsNetwork contact Geoff de Baux on (02) 6252 5032 or visit the national Statistical Services website on http://www.nss.gov.au.

FaCSIA Conducting Research into Longitudinal Surveys

Longitudinal surveys provide information on how well strategies for social policy development are meeting their key objectives. The ability to use this source hinges on an understanding of the statistical properties and limitations of the data, and corresponding sophisticated analytical techniques, which are not widely understood in a policy context.

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is supporting a short term research projection comparing estimates derived from longitudinal household surveys with estimates from other methods. For further details on this research contact Stephen Horn, (02) 6244 1485.

Did you know...

The number of people living alone is projected to increase from 1.8 million in 2001 to between 2.8 million (Series I) and 3.7 million (Series III) by 2026. This represents an increase of between 57% and 105%
From the **Year Book of Australian 2006** **(Cat. No. 1301.0)**

Household Use of Information Technology Survey in Queensland

Close collaboration between the Queensland Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation (DSDTI) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics has made data available on the household use of information technology at the regional level in Queensland.

The ABS worked with DSDTI to define the issues and prioritise their needs and requirements. An ABS survey on Household Use of Technology in Australia (HUIT) had already collected data from various surveys on a yearly basis. Using these existing datasets, a time series analysis was developed to meet the needs of DSDTI. The process of developing the data for Queensland from existing data and regular consultation throughout the entire project strengthened the relationship between the two organisations.

Two phases of data were produced for the *Use of Information Technology by Households in Queensland* (cat no 8146.3) :

- a time series analysis (1998 to 2003), released in November 2005; and
- a publication of latest available data (2004–05) released in May 2006.

These publications present an analysis of computer and Internet use for households in Queensland.

For more information about this project contact Kylie Lane ph. (07) 3222 6168 or kylie.lane@abs.gov.au

Measuring Innovation in Tasmania

Innovation is becoming an increasingly hot topic for state and federal government agencies; it's widely acknowledged as holding the key to future productivity improvement and economic growth. The measurement of innovation is of particular interest to government as innovation impacts on economic development and management; and is a measure of the health of industry in an increasingly competitive global environment.

Recently the Faculty of Business at the University of Tasmania created the Australian Innovation Research Centre (AIRC). Supported by the Tasmanian Department of Economic Development, AIRC will research key issues in the areas of innovation performance, economic development and public policies.

An Innovation Scorecard is being investigated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and the Tasmanian Innovations Advisory Board with the assistance of the AIRC.

The project steering committee for the Innovation Scorecard recently took the opportunity to meet with staff from the ABS Innovation and Technology National Statistics Centre in Canberra and the ABS Innovation and Technology Business Statistics Centre in WA, creating a strong network of organisations involved in measuring innovation.

For more information about this project contact Kieran O'Brien ph. (03) 6222 5847 or kieran.obrien@abs.gov.au

SCH Website Address Is Changing

The Statistical Clearing House web site <www.sch.gov.au> will be moving to the National Statistical Service (NSS) web site <www.nss.gov.au> at the end of June 2006.

The SCH website will become part of this larger site and will be accessible via the top navigation bar on any page of the new design.

Some tools and information, including reference materials and the sample size calculator, will be found in the NSS section of the website. More specific information will be released with the new site.

People dealing with the SCH will be contacted about these changes. Please advise the appropriate people within your Department / Agency and update any links to the new address of www.nss.gov.au.

For a short time, visitors to the SCH website will be automatically transferred to the NSS website.

Survey Design and Collection

Survey designers have a number of different data collection methods from which to choose from, which is dependent on a range of factors such as what data is sought in the survey and the available budget. The methods generally used are listed below:

- Face to face interviews are mainly used for household surveys and involve a trained interviewer visiting the respondent, asking the questions and recording the responses. Face to face interviewers enable the use of complex questions and allow respondents to give detailed responses. The interviewer is able to use aids, such as prompt cards to jog the interviewer's memory about past events. However, respondents may be reluctant to disclose sensitive information in this environment.
- Telephone interviews are generally used for household and business surveys. The interviewer telephones the respondent and asks questions and records the responses. The advantage of telephone surveys over face to face interviews is that they are cheaper to conduct and like the face to face interviews, can ask complex questions and use aids to prompt the respondent. However, it is harder to establish the credibility of the interviewer and develop a rapport. It is also easier for respondents to terminate the interview.

  Telephones rely on the respondent having access to a telephone and some privacy during the call. Certain sections of the population do not have easy access to a telephone and other groups, such as young children are not easily interviewed by this method.
- In the third method, paper based self enumeration, questionnaires are either hand delivered or mailed to respondents, then collected by hand or mailed back. Although self-enumerated forms can be cost effective, they have the lowest response rate, and respondents can easily miss or skip questions. Other disadvantages are the level of complexity that can be asked and the time lag between sending out the questionnaire and its return.
- The final method is an electronic version of the self enumerated questionnaire (an e-form), which can be sent to respondents over the internet. Advantages include automatic querying of responses at the point of entry, thereby improving data quality. Disadvantages in e-forms are the cost of developing the e-form, the ease with which respondents can ignore or delete correspondence and the difficulty of ensuring the security of the data. Support costs may increase if respondents need access to help-desk type staff and support than the other methods to successfully complete the form.

Both face to face and telephone interviewing are increasingly using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) rather than paper based forms. Computer assisted interviewing allows the sequencing of the questions to be controlled by the computer, with irrelevant questions skipped. The interviewer keys responses directly into the computer, doing away with the need to enter the data into a database at a later time and improving the quality of the data.

However computer assisted interviewing increases the cost of set-up of the survey and training, and requires the computer equipment to be maintained. It is unsuitable for surveys where the interviewer is unable to sit down, ie surveys in the homeless or in remote areas.

To summarise, survey designers should consider the survey methods and tools to be used as early as possible. Each method and tool has advantages and imposes limitations on what can be collected and how the questions are asked.

This article is base on Chapter 3 of the NSS Handbook. The handbook is available online from the NSS website and contains a fuller explanation of how to design a survey along with more information about each of the steps.

Statistical Clearing House Seminar Series

The next seminar will be held on 23rd June 2006 commencing 9 am at ABS House.

The topic is "Translating an Information Need into a Survey". Often, as public servants, we are asked to get data on a particular topic to either inform policy, develop resources, or review a program or product.

This seminar will take you through the steps from identifying the information need through to ways to fulfil that need. It will cover:

- initial questions to ask when beginning a project
- identifying frameworks relevant to the project
- initial research of the topic, and
- how to determine whether a qualitative or quantitative approach should be taken.

Please note that this is an introductory level seminar.

Attendance is FREE.

For more information or to reserve a place for this seminar, please contact Jo Edwards on **02 6252 5701** or email **jo.edwards@abs.gov.au.**